

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS FACT SHEET

Education and training of early childhood education teachers positively linked to quality:

The education and specialized training of early education teachers is a core component of a high quality program, and in turn, children's success. Research on the benefits of early childhood education defines high quality programs as those that have well-trained and well-supervised teachers and low staff turnover. Staff turnover is lower in high-quality programs because teachers are encouraged and supported to develop professionally through workshops, training and college courses. In short, knowledgeable teachers are better prepared to respond to the children and their families, have the skills to create enriched learning experiences and environments for children, and have greater confidence about how to perform their job.

Status of early childhood education teacher training in Arizona:

Teachers in licensed child care programs and family care homes are not required to have any training prior to working with young children. Less than half (39%) of child care centers in Arizona require teachers to have more education than a high school diploma or GED. Individuals providing care in their home that choose not to be listed with Resource & Referral or registered with the Department of Economic Security or Child & Adult Food Program are not required to meet any training standards at all.

Barriers to education:

Arizona early childhood education teachers earn a median hourly wage of \$8.00, making financing additional education beyond their reach. While 90% of recently surveyed programs paid their staff's registration for training, only 58% provided reimbursement for college tuition. Due to these barriers, it often takes up to 5 years or more for a teacher to complete an Associates Degree. Provision of scholarships for tuition, books, fees and other related expenses, such as transportation and child care for their own children would allow many more early childhood education teachers to pursue education beyond a high school diploma or GED.

A statewide scholarship program:

The Governor's Office and Arizona State University received a \$1.6 million U.S. Department of Education Early Educator grant in September 2003 to phase-in a statewide scholarship program for 300 Arizona early childhood education teachers. The grant provides funding and academic support for current early childhood education teachers and those just entering the field to start or continue their course work toward an Associates degrees beginning in Spring 2004. It is being implemented in selected counties and will be phased-in throughout Arizona, as funding is made available. Scholarships will pay for tuition and books for 5 classes and offer a modest incentive to participants who work in programs that provide services to low-income families. All scholarship participants are required to register with S*CCEEDS, a professional registry program for early childhood education teachers and administrators.

The Governor is assessing if Workforce Investment Act funds can be made available to expand scholarships to an additional 50 participants in late 2004.